

LIII.—*On the Representatives of Putorius ermineus in Algeria and Ferghana.* By OLDFIELD THOMAS.

WHILE investigating the constancy of the markings and other characters of *Putorius ermineus* for comparison with the newly discovered *P. hibernicus*\*, the differences presented by certain representatives of the species found on the southern and eastern outskirts of its Old-World range have appeared to me worthy of notice.

One of the forms to be considered is from Algeria and the other from Ferghana, Central Asia; and both show a marked reduction in size as compared with typical individuals of the species from Northern Europe, a fact instructive in its bearing on the question as to what is the real centre of distribution of this widely spread animal. But curiously enough, contrary to the usual rule, the southern (Algerian) form is characterized by a particularly short tail, while elsewhere, even in the Arctic Regions, the tail is always long. That from Ferghana, on the other hand, has the normal proportions of the species, although combined with reduction in size and a coloration apparently due to desert influences.

As tending to oppose the generally received ideas on the relative value of size and proportions as against that of colour-markings, special attention may be drawn to the constancy of the distribution of the markings of *P. ermineus* amid all the variations found in size, proportions, and actual shades of colour.

*Putorius ermineus algiricus*, subsp. n.

Decidedly smaller than in *typicus*, with a shorter tail. Colour of back with a much stronger fulvous suffusion, and of belly more markedly sulphur-yellow. Distribution of colours quite as in *typicus*. Upper lip and chin and edge of ears white. Yellow colour of belly running down inner sides of hind limbs on to the digits, leaving the outer halves of the metatarsals brown.

Skull small and slender, with a particularly low and narrow brain-case.

Dimensions of type (an adult female skin):—

Head and body 205 millim.; tail, without hairs 52, with hairs 76; hind foot 31·5.

Skull: length from gnathion to upper edge of foramen magnum 39; zygomatic breadth 19·8; interorbital breadth 9; breadth of brain-case 18; height of brain-case above level of

\* Ann. & Mag. Nat. Hist., Apr. 1895, p. 374.

bullæ 13·3 ; palate length from gnathion 15·2 ; palate breadth between outer corners of  $\frac{p-4}{m-1}$  12 ; horizontal length of  $\frac{p-4}{m-1}$  4·2, of  $\frac{p-1}{m-1}$  4·5.

*Hab.* Algeria. *Type* from "Environs d'Alger" (*Parzudaki*).

*Type*: B.M. 56.3.12.13.

The specimens now described are those called by Dr. Gray\* "*Mustela erminea*, var. 1. *africana*," a term assigned without much inquiry to the Algerian representative of the Weasel group † by Lataste, who was evidently not aware that any member of the *ermineus* group occurred in that country. In this he was the more to be excused, as the only description given by Gray was, "Tail very short, black-tipped, one sixth the length of body,"—a description quite true of some members of the Weasel group. Gray, however, was here perfectly correct, as the specimens really prove to represent a tenable variety of *ermineus*, and, had he not used a name already preoccupied, his designation would have had to be adopted.

When laid beside a series of ordinary European *P. ermineus*, the Algerian skins are very readily distinguishable from all by their shorter tails and more fulvous colour. Curiously enough, in the last-named character these southern Stoats are most nearly matched at the furthest northern point of the range of *P. ermineus*, the only skins in the Museum series at all like them being some from the Polar Region (Greenland, 82° N.) and extreme north of North America (Fort Simpson, Mackenzie River). But the northern specimens have the long tails of *P. e. typicus*.

*Putorius ermineus ferghanæ*, subsp. n.

Similar to *P. e. typicus* in proportions and essential respects, but very much smaller, the male considerably smaller than the female of that form. General colour pale, almost matching Ridgway's "isabella colour," with a distinct suffusion of yellowish throughout above and below, except just on the chin and throat, which are pure white. Head especially

\* P. Z. S. 1865, p. 111; Cat. Carn. B. M. 1869. *Nec M. africana*, Desm. 1818.

† *P. numidicus*, Puch. Rev. Mag. Zool. .vii. p. 393 (1855). The type specimen of this form has been most kindly re-examined on my behalf by Dr. Trouessart, and he informs me that it unquestionably belongs to the Weasel group, and is, in his opinion, a mere variety of *P. nivalis*. I am also indebted to him for a complete list of all the specimens of the present group in the Paris Museum, with their measurements, which have naturally proved of the greatest value to me.

paler than in *typicus*, about matching the dorsal colour of an English weasel (*P. nivalis*), and less conspicuously darker than the back. Distribution of colours as in *typicus*; the small white spot behind the eye and the white ear-rim well marked, and the underside of the proximal half of tail pale sulphur-yellow, like the belly.

Skull scarcely equalling in size that of a large male weasel.

Dimensions of the type (a well-made skin, ♂):—

Head and body 200 millim.; tail without end-hairs 63, with end-hairs 88; hind foot 31.

Skull: length from gnathion to upper rim of *foramen magnum* 35; zygomatic breadth 18·2; interorbital breadth 8·6; intertemporal breadth 8·4; breadth of brain-case 17·8; palate length from gnathion 14·2; palate breadth between outer corners of  $\frac{p.4}{m.1}$  and  $\frac{m.1}{m.1}$  11·3; horizontal length of  $\frac{p.4}{m.1}$  4·1, of  $\frac{m.1}{m.1}$  4·3. Upper canine, cingulum to point behind, 3·1.

*Hab.* Ferghana. Coll. Th. Barey, June 10, 1893.

*Type*: B.M. 94.9.2.2. Received from the Branicki Museum, Warsaw.

This peculiar little animal, owing to the identity of the distribution of its colours with that found in *P. ermineus*, I retain within the same species, but consider that its diminutive size and markedly paler colour necessitate its separation as a subspecies. So great is the difference in size that, as already noticed, its skull is even smaller than that of a large male weasel.

It will be of much interest to find out what is the exact range of this little stoat, and whether it is confined to the near neighbourhood of its type locality or is the representative of the ordinary stoat throughout the highlands of Central Asia. It may be noticed that a specimen from Narimskaja, on the Ob (Dr. Otto Finsch), although rather smaller than average Norwegian examples, is nothing like so small as the Ferghana one, while its colour is absolutely normal.

With the Pygmy Stoat Mr. Barey obtained a weasel which I refer to the form called by Blanford *P. Stoliczkanus*, but which will probably prove to have very much the same degree of distinction, whether specific or subspecific, from *P. nivalis* that *P. e. ferghanæ* has from *P. e. typicus*.

As both of the subspecies above described are small representatives of a single species, the question naturally arises whether they have any direct relationship to each other; but for the elucidation of this point specimens from intermediate localities must be obtained and compared with each of them. There appears to be a certain faunistic community between

Algeria and Central Asia so far as mammals are concerned \*, and it is probable that we have in this southern fringe to the "Palæarctic" Region a zone corresponding with the Sonoran Region of N. America, similarly interposed between the Boreal Region and the tropical ones south of it, and perhaps once similarly distinct from those to the north and south, however it is now obscured by the migrations and other modifications induced in the west by the sinking of the Mediterranean and in the east by the rise of the Thibetan plateau. Such speculations must, however, be reserved until our knowledge of the exact distribution of the mammals of the Old World is enormously advanced and in some slight degree comparable to that which in America has enabled Dr. Merriam to make his valuable and far-reaching observations on the faunistic regions of that hemisphere.

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LIV.—*Note on the Genus Goniopleura, Westwood, with the Description of a new Species.* By C. J. GAHAN, M.A.

THE genus *Goniopleura* contains some of the most striking and remarkable species among the whole of the Phytophagous Coleoptera; but, strangely enough, none of the authors who have been more especially engaged in the study of this group of beetles succeeded in discovering the true affinities of the genus. Westwood, its founder, contented himself by stating that it came near *Chrysomela*. Clark, who described the second species, referred the genus without further comment to the subfamily Galerucinae. Subsequent writers, with the single exception of Chapuis, do not seem to have questioned this position. But even Chapuis, though he recognized in the genus certain Eumolpidous characteristics, did not venture to remove it from the Galerucinae, but formed for it a special group—the *Goniopleurites*—which he placed at the end of this subfamily.

Having been recently engaged in studying the genus, I find its characters such that I have no hesitation in assigning it to the subfamily Eumolpinae, where it has a very close ally in the genus *Aulexis* of Baly. The antennae of *Goniopleura* are as widely separated at their points of insertion as in many genera of Eumolpinae, and more widely than in any genus of Galerucinae; so that I fail to appreciate Chapuis's objection to placing it in the Eumolpinae on account of the approxima-

\* Witness the distribution of the genera *Meriones*, *Otonycteris*, &c.